

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 624

By West

A RESOLUTION to recognize and honor Chris Clark on the occasion of his retirement.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this legislative body should pause to specially honor, particularly on the occasion of their retirement, those venerable citizens who have distinguished themselves as community leaders of whom we can all be proud; and

WHEREAS, one such exceptional individual is television news anchor Chris Clark; having distinguished himself as a broadcast journalist par excellence during his forty-one year career at WTVF-Channel 5, he has entered into a well-deserved retirement; and

WHEREAS, Chris Clark was born on December 9, 1938, in Atlanta, Georgia, and graduated from North Fulton High School; as a teenager bussing tables at his father's Eagle Café across from the offices of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Chris heard the colorful stories told by reporters, men and women in the know who were always privy to the action, and decided to become one himself, graduating from the University of Georgia's School of Journalism in 1962; and

WHEREAS, the grandson of a Greek immigrant, Chris Botsaris was forced to change his name before being hired at an Albany, Georgia, television station in 1961; Chris Clark explains, "These were the days when you couldn't have an ethnic-sounding last name. I took the job and I took the name. It was picked for me by the station director and was the only choice given."; and

WHEREAS, from 1964 to 1966, Mr. Clark anchored and reported the news at an ABC affiliate in Atlanta, Georgia, until a prescient WLAC (WTVF) executive invited him to Nashville to interview for lead news anchor; Chris Clark went on to become the face of one of Middle Tennessee's most watched news sources for over forty years; and

WHEREAS, through the course of his career, Chris Clark has crossed paths with several high profile personalities and influential leaders, from conducting interviews with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and President Richard Nixon to launching the career of a young journalist named Oprah Winfrey, hiring her for her first television job in 1974; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Clark's relationship with former Governor Buford Ellington took him to the White House on several occasions and even involved him in a hostage situation; and

WHEREAS, in December of 1969, an inmate at the Tennessee State Penitentiary took 23 people hostage in the visitors' gallery of the prison; the convict told authorities he would negotiate only with Chris Clark, whom he had seen on television, so the Governor called the news anchor to mediate. A little over four hours later, Chris Clark had brought the situation with the knife-wielding inmate to a peaceful close; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Clark's work at NewsChannel 5 has taken him around the world, reporting the news from locales such as Israel, the former Soviet Union, Great Britain, and Puerto Rico; he has tracked drug lords from Middle Tennessee to the Dominican Republic and has delivered food to hungry people in Somalia with the National Guard; and

WHEREAS, during his News Director days at WTVF, Chris Clark led the station's conversion from film to electronic news coverage, and as Chair of the Society of Professional Journalists Freedom of Information Committee, he played a key role in convincing the Tennessee Supreme Court to allow an experiment with cameras in the Court; that experiment persuaded the justices to allow cameras in state courts; and

WHEREAS, he is certainly no stranger to honors and accolades, and Chris Clark's contributions to television news have been recognized by the Middle Tennessee Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences with an Emmy Award in 1993 for Lifetime Achievement in Broadcast Journalism, and he has also been named Broadcaster of the Year by the Associated Press; and

WHEREAS, despite the many demands placed upon him, Mr. Clark still finds time to contribute his remarkable talents to his community as a member of numerous worthy organizations; he is a longtime member and former president of Nashville's Downtown Rotary Club, has served on the board for YMCA's Camp Widjiwagan for many years, and has worked

for decades on behalf of the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, including serving as President of the Parish Council for eight years; and

WHEREAS, after a long and distinguished career full of fascinating stories and excitement, Chris Clark is looking forward to trading it all in for more time with his two daughters, Penelope and Denise, and his two grandchildren, Tom and John; he also looks forward to having the time to pursue his passions, from taking cooking classes to auditing a few film courses at a local university; and

WHEREAS, throughout his estimable career as news anchor of WTVF-Channel 5, Chris Clark has demonstrated the utmost professionalism, ability, and integrity, winning the unbridled respect and admiration of his colleagues and the good people of Middle Tennessee alike; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Clark truly epitomizes the dedicated news professional who is wholly committed to the highest ideals of public service, and he should be specially recognized for his manifold achievements in broadcast journalism on the occasion of his retirement; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and commend Chris Clark for his exceptional service to Tennessee as a journalist and a citizen, salute his professional expertise and personal excellence, and extend to him our warmest wishes for an enjoyable retirement and every continued success in his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.